

MEN OF

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12th Air Force, United States*

Issue No. 7



THE 57TH

*Women of the 57th Bomb Wing,
Army Air Force in World War II*

Winter 2026

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We honor:

The Artists Who Painted the Nose Art

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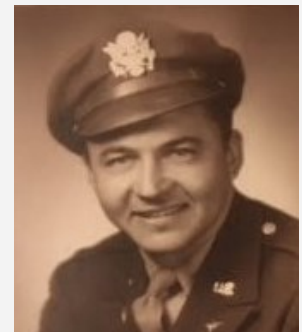
Dick Reed



Len Wichtowski



Bernie Peters



James Moffitt



Harry DeBoer



Hymie Setzer



Millard Rives



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

We received a request from an individual who was writing a book about the artists who painted the nose art on WW2 aircraft. He wanted to include the artists of the 57th Bomb Wing. We realized that we knew very little about those artists. We did some research and forwarded it to the author, but we also want to pass that information on to our readers and honor the men who produced the iconic nose art for the Wing.

Also in this issue is a review of a new book examining the loss of a ship in the 310th BG, 428th BS. The ship was nicknamed "Sad Sack." The author is from an Italian research group and he has made his book available to read online for free in either English or Italian!

A neighbor and friend of a long-time publisher of the Wing Newsletter, has shared with us a wonderful remembrance of Victor Hancock.

Do you know who the Junior Birdmen were? Their theme song is still sung around the camp fires at many youth summer camps. The song has a variety of lyrics and campers continue to improvise more verses. The song is often accompanied with a series of goofy arm gestures. But who were the Junior Birdmen, and why are we writing about them in this journal?

Another feature is excerpts from a Group newspaper from 1943. We find these newspapers of particular interest for a couple of reasons. First, they were usually produced by enlisted men in the ground echelons. Combat crews are featured extensively in the official records. They are on crew lists, mission reports, and lists of medal awards. But in the self-published newspapers the ground troops are featured more often. Their contributions were essential to "Keep 'em Flying," but in many cases the newspapers are the only record of their activities and their names.

Speaking of enlisted men... And since February is Black History Month, we salute the troops of the 41st Engineer Regiment. This was an all African-American regiment that served along side of the men of the 57th, building and maintaining the runways and buildings where the Groups were stationed. They also made major contributions to the morale of our boys.

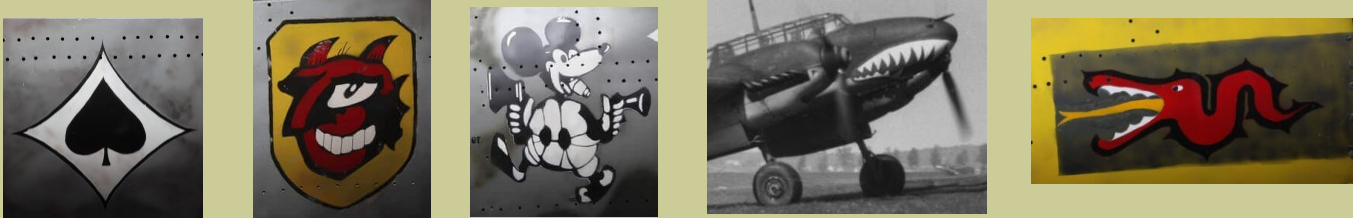
We hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal of the Men of the 57th!



Nose Art and the Artists of the 57th Bomb Wing

Everyone loves the nose art on the aircraft of the Second World War. It was always so insolent, defiant, and self-assured. It seemed to say to the enemy, “This is what we have on *our* mind, we’ll take care of *you* in our spare time.”

Many of the Luftwaffe planes carried nose art, but it was mostly rather prosaic, rarely going for the risqué or whimsical.



Examples of Luftwaffe Nose Art

I asked several of our veterans who was it that selected the nose art for an aircraft? I got a variety of answers, but nothing consistent. My impression was that anyone who wanted could add nose art to a ship. I speculate that in most cases it would be the ground crews who serviced that particular ship. Pilots and crews moved around from one ship to another, but the ground maintenance crews stayed with just their ship. In a sense, the crew chief ‘owned’ that aircraft.

There couldn’t have been a great deal of bureaucracy involved or ship names like “Booger” would not have been likely to have been approved going up the chain of command. Nevertheless, for something as unofficial as a ship’s name, I find it interesting that the MACRs have a field to enter a ship’s nickname.

Nose art is beloved and revered, but in most cases, we know very little about the artists who created these memorable works of art. There are some exceptions.

310th Bombardment Group Artists

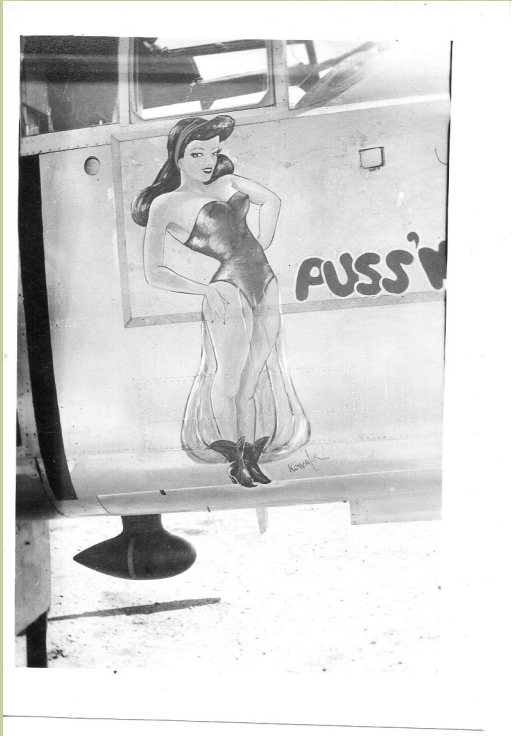
In the 310th Bombardment Group one of the prominent artists was Ray “Jack” Kowalic. Kowalic was very prolific. He was an instrument specialist with the 380th BS, but painted aircraft in multiple squadrons. He also designed the cover for the 380th BS Victory in Europe book.



Wing Historian, Princess Barbi, received an email from one of our veterans who gave her information about Kowalic and his nose art:

“The going rate for nose art was \$35-40 per girl! The crew took a collection sometimes, that was quite a sum at the time considering their monthly pay!”

We know that Kowalic painted Puss n Boots, Sleepy Time Gal and Bettie.

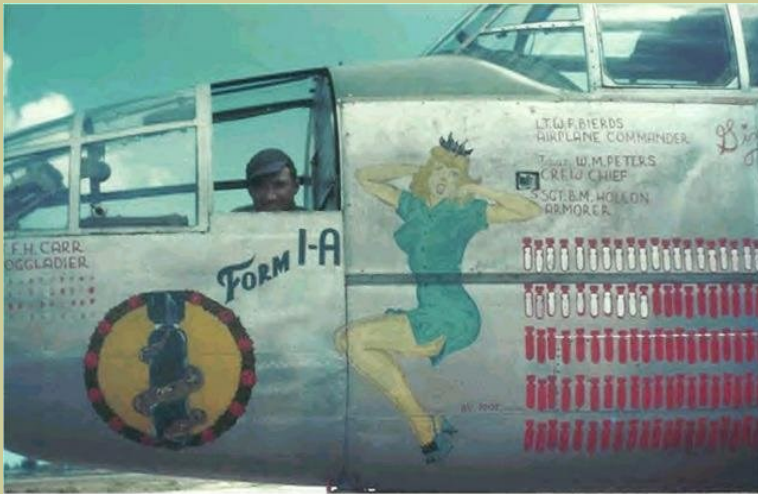


Lt. Suey Wong on right with Sleepy Time Gal!

Kowalic wasn't the only artist in the 310th BG. Bob Spradling and John Gullic are also mentioned in the records. The Winter 2008 edition of the Wing Newsletter contained this passage:

“We expect aircraft #327543 arrived at Ghisonaccia Gare in Corsica about the middle of May in 1944. I am not aware who the original was but Moe Spradling of the ground crew drew a delightful blond in a light blue pajama top on the side of the fuselage just forward of the pilot's window. He had named her “FORM 1A.”” [Form 1A was filled out by the pilot on each flight and recorded details of the flight including any defects observed in the aircraft. This often created more work for the ground crews.]

We know that Spradling also painted Dear Arabella.



310th BG - 381st BS - Ghisonaccia - Gare

Form I-A and Dear Arabella by Bob Spradling



321st Bombardment Group Artists

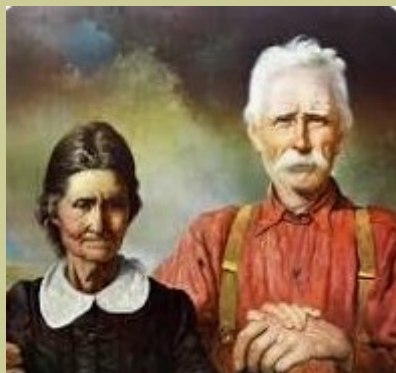
The 321st BG was particularly lucky to have an artist of the caliber of Leslie E. Emery, 447th Bomb Squadron. He served as a turret man and armorer. He painted Ave Maria, MMR and others.



In the Winter 1998 edition of the Wing Newsletter Alton Fowler (447th BS) reported:

“Leslie Emery painted the pictures on the noses of planes in the 447th Squadron. He did the “Ave Maria” which I believe was shown in the National Geographic. He also did a portrait of General George Marshall, which hangs at Virginia Military Academy. Emery specialized in pictures of Mexican children and old men and women. Both, he felt showed character and sensitivity.

He did well in the art of painting and was a master. His paintings regularly went for \$20,000 and his drawings for \$1,500.”



Post-War art work by Leslie Emery

The 447th BS was lucky to have another artist, Lt. Arthur M. Holloway. The Winter 2000 issue of the Wing Newsletter carried this article by Richard Springler, 447th BS:

“I flew a B-25C, serial 42-64600, from Greenville, S.C. to Rabat Sale. We joined the 321st, 446th about 20th of May 1943. Our navigator, Lt. Arthur M. Holloway, was an artist. After talking it over with the crew we decided to name the plane LADY LUCK after the comic strip ‘Super Woman.’ Art painted the nose art prior to our overseas flight. When we reached the 447th several crews asked Art to paint nose art for their planes. He painted about five or six but refused to continue as most were lost in combat and Art felt that he was jinxing them. Our “Lady Luck” continued and as I was returning home after 53 missions, heard that “Lady Luck” had suffered a landing accident and was totaled.”



A modern homage to Lady Luck of the 447th

340th Bombardment Group Artists

One of the artists was Joe Moore, crew chief with the 489th Bomb Squadron. He did the artwork for Briefing Time and, probably, Little Joe.



Joe Domsic (l) and Joe Moore (r) with Briefing Time

Another artist in the 340th BG was Durley Bratton, 488th BS. We have indications that Durley Bratton painted several aircraft. We are only sure that he painted the ship Four Girls. He may have helped paint the Dogface ships in the 487th BS along with Daniel Barton.



Durley Bratton painting Four Girls

Daniel A. Barton, 487th BS, was the man who came up with the idea of honoring the dogface infantry soldiers the Wing was supporting by painting the aircraft with the Willie and Joe characters created by Bill Mauldin.

Bill Mauldin was very famous with the “Dogface Soldiers” in the infantry fighting the among the Mud, Mules and Mountains of Italy.

13 aircraft in the 487th BS were painted with the characters created by Bill Mauldin. Mauldin even did the drawings of the characters and sent them to the 487th to be used as models for the nose art painting.

The respect shown to the ground forces by the Army Air Corps struck a chord with the guys on the ground as well as with the folks back home and the 487th Bomb Squadron soon became famous as the “Dogface Squadron.”

Read more about the “Dogface Squadron” in the following pages of the Wing Journal.



THE DOGFACE SQUADRON

This document is found in our Archives. It is a photo copy of an article printed on thin army typing paper. It is clearly a publicity article, but the author is not identified.

Rivalry between the services is as old as the services themselves. Marines supposedly nurse a grudge against the Navy, the Navy doesn't like the Army, the Army resents the Air Force and the Paratroops are reputed to be mad at everybody - - according to tradition.

But popular traditions are frequently all wet, as the history of the "Dogface Squadron," which has been slugging away daily in Italy on bombing chores for the benefit of the ground forces, amply demonstrates. Planes of this squadron - a unit of the famous 340th B-25 Mitchell group - are decorated, not with pin-up girls, but with cartoons of Bill Mauldin's unshaved, sardonic front-line G.I.'s.

Thirteen of the Mitchell bombers in this squadron, which has a close support history dating back to the cracking of the Mareth line in Tunisia, sport Mauldin's "dogface" art. When the squadron goes over the American Fifth and British Eighth army lines at 10,000 feet to blast strong points or forward supply dumps, no Yank or Limey infantryman can see the cartoons, but they can glimpse the hell raining down from the bomb bays in the form of fragmentation and demolition bombs.

Maj. John E. Rapp, 25, of Lima, OH, is commander of the "Dogface Squadron" and he has two swell personal reasons for wanting to beat lumps on our bad neighbors in Italy. The reasons are his two cousins, one serving with the Fifth army and one with the Eighth. Recently one was wounded in action. Many other members of the Dogface Squadron and the 340th group have brothers and relatives serving with the Fifth army, some of whom have been

wounded or killed.

Currently the 340th group, which is commanded by Col. Willis F. Chapman, of San Antonio, Texas, is devoting all its attention to bridge-busting in the Italian Alps and the Po Valley. And what the Dogfaces and Col. Chapman's other crews aren't doing to these vital road and rail installations isn't worth telling. In the six months' period from July - December, 1944, the 340th was assigned 157 viaduct and rail and road bridge targets, and hit 141 of them! The 340th boys aren't too preoccupied with statistics but they think this sets them up as the premier bridge-busting group in the world and Col. Chapman seconds the motion.

Unfortunately for the earthbound dogfaces, who love a good close support interlude, the target bridges are too far away to be appreciated. But the shattered communications lines that have resulted have made it impossible for the Germans to ship to the Gothic line in quantity trains carrying troops, food, equipment and ammunition. The Nazis have had to scrape the bottom of their Italian stockpiles, and to move the materiel into position and have had to rely on motor transport, which they can ill afford owing to lack of petroleum and the fact that their vehicles are few and badly beaten up.

Attacks by the Dogface squadron and other Mitchell bomber units on the Alpine rail line leading north to the Brenner pass have been so severe and so successful recently that German road gangs have been running in every direction at all hours of the day and night to try to keep it open long enough to move a single train over a relatively short distance. And the Nazi

soldier on the Italian front has felt the pinch in supplies and personal comfort. Information from Allied sources reveals that German troops entering or leaving Italy on furlough or as casual replacements may be detained as long as 72 hours to serve on work units making emergency rail repairs. This is right down the Dogface squadron's alley. Said one man, "We're making them hitch-hike up to the front, and then what have they got when they get there?"

But past operations of the 340th have been predominantly of a close-support nature. In all, the Dogfaces and their brother airmen have supported four major beachhead operations in the Mediterranean theater, including the lightning operations in southern France last August. After a rugged type of self-training in close support bombing for the British Eighth in Tunisia, the group did some great bombing for General Patton's Seventh army in Sicily.

"My cousin, Technical Sgt. Metro Vasil, who was wounded in Sicily and won the Silver Star there, remembers the close support work our B-25's did on the Jerries at Troina and Randazzo," said Staff Sgt. William Dutchick, 27, Yonkers, N.Y., sheet metal specialist. "We met in Sicily after the campaign was over and he said it was sure all right the way the B-25's hit those places. Now he's a medic with the Ninth division on the western front."

Close support missions, Sgt. Dutchick maintains, means busy times for the sheet metal men, though he admits recent bridge-busting assignments keep him busy patching flak holes. "The Messina Straits jobs (missions flown against the Nazis evacuating Sicily in mid-August, 1943) were plenty rough. One day all the planes we had out came back with up to 80 holes. But the Anzio beachhead took the cake."

When the Fifth army was driving ahead bitterly towards Bologna last September the 340th ran a

mission against a third echelon motor and tank repair depot on the outskirts of town that hit the Germans heavily. Loaded with five hundred pounders, the B-25's sowed their patterns of demolition on the area defined at briefing. Bomb strike photos bore out the bombardiers' claims of success, but the extent of damage was not known in the 340th until a few days later when A-2 jubilantly passed down the word that some 30 tanks were destroyed and many motor vehicles wrecked or badly damaged.

First Lieutenant Robert F. Rushton, 21, of New Haven, Mich., a pilot of the Dogface squadron who has just completed his first tour of duty, had double trouble in the space of three days when the squadron was tackling German Troops resisting the advances of the Eighth army outside Rimini.

"We were dropping frags on German positions a few hundred yards in front of our lines," he said. "The flak was bad - those gunners on the front have your range right away - but our squadron put down a hundred percent in the target area. My plane had rudder trim tabs shot up and all but one elevator cable gone, and the hydraulics were blown out, but we found an emergency field and made a landing okay."

"The group sent over a plane and brought us home and two days later we took another crack at the Rimini area. It was another hundred percent job, but we got shot up a second time and I had to make a single engine landing at another emergency field. A couple of days later the Eighth went right through the positions, so I guess we did some good."

Other Dogface fliers tell similar stories of their experiences, whether bridge busting or close support they also have the idea they're doing the earthbound dogfaces some good. Come to think of it, they are.



Dogface Nose Art

[Collected from Doug Cook's wonderful website honoring his father, Charles Cook. See it here: <https://www.reddog1944.com/>]



[Photo Credit: Mark McCandlish]



7E Nose Art [Photo credit: Hernan Voss]



7G Nose Art



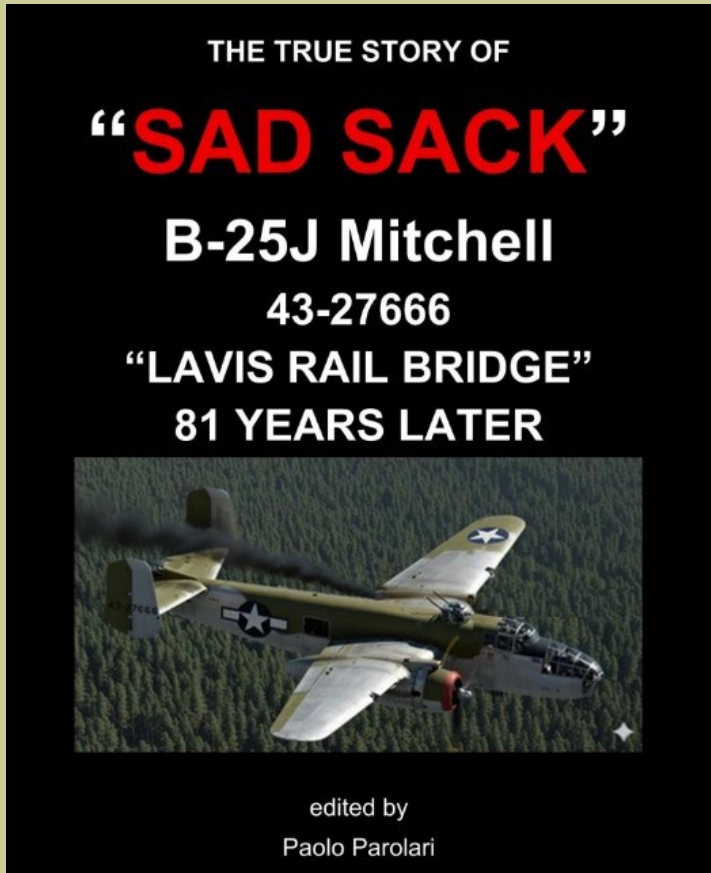
7V Nose Art [Credit Mark McCandlish]



7R Nose Art

The True Story of “Sad Sack” 81 Years Later

Edited by Paolo Parolari



We wish to make you aware of a new book just published online that details the tragic story of the loss of a ship and crew from the 310th BG, 428th BS.

The ship nicknamed “Sad Sack” was part of an attack on the Lavis Rail Bridge in the Brenner Pass on January 4, 1945.

After “Bombs Away!” Sad Sack was struck by flak in the left engine. The engine actually detached from the wing and fell to earth.

The pilot and co-pilot valiantly fought to regain control of the aircraft to give the crew a chance to bail out.

Unfortunately, of the six-man crew, only two survived.

The crew consisted of:

Pilot: Robert G. McPherson

Co-pilot: Nolan D. Pickett

Bombardier: William J. Rutherford

Turret Gunner: Milo Dailey

Radio Gunner: Orlando R. Fazenbaker

Tail Gunner: Eli L. Weaver

The True Story of “Sad Sack” 81 Years Later (cont’d)

Edited by Paolo Parolari

The book is the culmination of a project by the Italian historical group “Aviation Archaeology: Trentino Alto Adige.”

The events surrounding the loss of Sad Sack have been meticulously researched, culminating in not only identifying the exact location of the crash site, but an excavation revealing a surprising number of artifacts.

The book is well written, comprehensive and full of photos and illustrations.

The Aviation Archaeology group was also able to collect eye witness accounts of the crash by Italian citizens living in the vicinity of the crash site at the time.

This is a very interesting read, and we can highly recommend it.

The best part is that Aviation Archeology has posted the book on their website where you can read it for FREE.

Even better, the book is posted in two versions: One in Italian and the other beautifully translated into English.

Find it on the Aviation Archeology website here at the bottom of their ‘Books’ webpage:

[The True Story of “Sad Sack”](#)



Reconstruction (Photoshop) showing the Sad Sack at 3,300 meters from Monte Casale

Illustration from the book: The True Story of “Sad Sack”



"Cannon and machine gun fire virtually hacked the B-25 Mitchell to tatters. The hydraulic system was knocked out...bomb bay doors fell open . . . landing wheels dangled out...incendiary bullets set fire to the right engine . . .right half of tail was shot off. But the bomber continued to fly to friendly territory, landing on a beach."

Army Air Forces report

***Give us
MORE B-25's***



**U. S. ARMY
OFFICIAL POSTER**

The Only Victor I've Known

(Victor Hancock, 321st BG, 445th BS)

By Jim Van Orden, Richardson, TX

Reprinted with permission of the author

You meet a lot of people during 70 years. There have been many Bob's, Bill's, Harry's, Henry's, Susan's, Barbara's, Mary's and Sally's in my life. But I had never met a Victor until a glorious day in October 2013.

As I took my usual afternoon walk, sun shining brightly through fall foliage and air cooling rapidly, I spotted a senior gentleman in an alley 100 feet away. He was wearing what appeared to be a military jacket.

"Were you in the 'big war'?" I asked.

"Yes, I was a pilot," he responded. We shook hands, his grip surprisingly firm, and I learned his name was Victor Hancock. He lived nearby and he told me he was 90 years old. I've always had great admiration for WW-II veterans, I told him, and had only met one other, a family friend who was among soldiers who stormed Normandy's beaches on D-Day in June 1944.

"Come in and let's get acquainted," said Victor. As we proceeded through his garage, I noticed a bicycle hanging on a wall. Our conversation quickly shifted to bicycles, and I asked whether he still rode the bike.

"I bicycled to my Dallas office for years," he told me. The handsome machine, made in 1954, was an antique. I was amazed to see it was a Schwinn Paramount, which then was the creme-de-la-creme of bicycles. Today, it's quite collectible and worth perhaps \$1,000 or more.

As we talked, Victor said he and his wife, Jo Ann, had lived in their Richardson house for 42 years, making them perhaps our oldest neighborhood residents. They also had been married 68 years. Before I left, Victor handed me a book written by one of his war heroes, journalist Ernie Pyle. Then he told me he had written a book about his life and war adventures.



His book was never published

Victor and I did many short walks after our alley introduction. His piercing blue eyes and sharp mind didn't miss a thing. I could see why he had been an ace pilot who flew B-25 bombers over Italy's Brenner Pass in 1942. Considered one of the war's most dangerous aerial missions, he regaled me with graphic stories of brave men who faced hot, exploding shrapnel that took down many planes and killed hundreds of airmen, as well as freezing temperatures while taking out Nazi roads, bridges and munitions factories.

"What have you done with your book...has it been published?" I asked.

"I wrote it a decade or so ago for my family," he responded. "An agent read it, but when she said her company would print it only if I handed over \$5,000, I decided it wasn't worth publishing." "Could I see a copy?" I asked.

"Yes...but it's only a computer document," he said.

I couldn't believe my good fortune. He and I met a week later, and I sat at his desk, which was buried in papers and stacks of magazines that spilled over onto the floor and filled bookcases and cabinets in the ten-foot-square space.

After making a copy of the book, titled "Just Passing Through," I noticed magazines strewn around the office displaying a bold banner proclaiming "Men of the 57th." Turned out the "57th" was an Army Air Force bomb wing made up of the living icons of WW-II. They were the men and women who, as Tom Brokaw described in his book, "The Greatest Generation," grew up during the Great Depression and fought the "Big War." Victor was the magazine's editor.

"Not too many of us left," Victor explained. "But we keep in contact and have a yearly reunion." As I read the magazine, which contained graphic photos of bombing raids, fighter planes and pilots, I was stunned to learn that 6,200 service men died each month-or 220 a day-from 1942 until the end of the war. Nearly 15,000 Army Air Force pilots, aircrew and other personnel, as well as nearly 14,000 planes, were lost inside the continental United States alone. Victor was one of the youngest first lieutenants to be commissioned (at age 19) and co-piloted the two-engine B-25 bomber.

"It wasn't fast but it was reliable and sturdy," he said, referring to the stubby-looking bomber with Plexiglas gun turrets at front and rear

and a large cannon protruding from the fuselage. "The Army Air Force produced almost ten thousand B-25s at a cost of \$142,194 apiece. Today, the same aircraft would sell for over one million dollars."

Death and Destruction

Victor saw a lot of death and destruction during his service. He and his six-member crew came within inches of dying on nearly two dozen missions over Italy and Germany. Their objective was to stop the flow of troops and war equipment coming through Italy's Brenner Pass set deep in the frozen Alps. The 57th lost 26 B-25s and 223 men before it all ended. I've read many war stories and watched several WW-II movies depicting aerial battles, but nothing matched Victor's descriptions in scope and detail. They were riveting...and very real. He had lived every moment.

In his book, Victor recalled his emotions and fears during a mission over Brenner Pass:

"I asked myself, 'What the hell am I doing here?' I can remember saying, 'Shit! I'm just twenty years old, is this crap going to screw things up so I will never get to see twenty-one?'"

"This was January 27, 1944, twelve thousand five hundred feet above the magnificently beautiful frozen Italian Alps in the Brenner Pass. This was the 'Battle of the Brenner.' One hundred and eight air crewmen aboard eighteen Billy Mitchell's were real serious about what we were going to do to the enemy below.

"But there were other feelings, too. For two hours I had become increasingly cold, my body near freezing. My hands felt as though the now painfully frostbitten fingers had taken leave from the knuckles, but I could still move them within the fleece-lined mittens if I tried

to, but only with a conscious effort. My feet had felt alarmingly numb a half an hour earlier, and dangerously I realized they had stopped hurting. I started stomping them on the cockpit floor in the futile effort to bring the circulation back and hoped the frost bite would not be too bad, if and when we returned to our base at Ghisonnacia. Actually, I was so damn near frozen, I thought dying could not be any worse than a good alternative to my present situation.

“Now, with the reality brought about by the scene before us and of what, inescapably, must yet be experienced, a far greater chill than the awful cold had made its way into my body. This chill made me viscerally weak. My bowels revolved and became contorted. My knees trembled slowly, just barely at first, and then like a metronome whose rhythmic beat was out of control knocked one kneecap into the other with increasing nervousness. I shamefully looked over at the pilot to see if he had noticed. The pilot was too intent on keeping our left wing on the lead ship as we flew a tight formation to take any notice of my personal problems or me, though once my gnarled bowels let go of their cargo. The silent gas got to him and he said ‘Jesus Christ, Hancock!’

“But my worst sensation was the gnawing doubt of my own character. My high self-image and substantial ego, built up during the past twenty years, were taking a terrible beating. I was scared. I did not want to be there doing my duty. I had never been a coward before and I was disgusted with this ugly fellow who had been hidden within me all my life just waiting for the opportunity to come out, like a cowardly Genie from his bottle. I had never encountered this part of me before. I did not like it. I sure did not want to be around him. The Air Force song about with those immortal words ‘we live in fame or go down in flame’ had taken on a different meaning. I wanted out of that plane! I felt like something sinister

was about to happen to me. And yet, I was transfixed upon the lethal objects ahead. Was I really going to die? ”Victor Hancock arrived in Corsica on January 22, 1945, flew his first combat mission on January 27, 1945, went to Heaven that same day.”

The Great Depression

Victor’s descriptions of life during the Great Depression were as riveting as his war stories. Steinbeck’s famous novel "The Grapes of Wrath" was marvelous fiction and created similar images. But Victor’s book, being non-fiction, captured on-the-scene realities in an amazing, true-life manner. There was nothing made up about the deprivation and poverty he and his family endured during the 1930s.

Born in 1923, Victor was a little boy when the stock market crashed, devastating the nation's economy. His father, Charles, who produced six children by three different wives, was a resourceful man who shouldered any number of jobs and businesses to support his family. Victor started life in Coquille, Oregon, a sleepy town near the Pacific coastline. His mother, Eloise, Charles' second wife (Charles and his first wife produced two sons), gave birth to Victor’s brother, Louis, 15 months earlier. Victor never knew his mother as she died shortly after his birth. His wasn't an easy birth, which he described in his book:

“As Dr. Richmond held the tiny body the baby’s complexion was blue; rapidly turning gray. There was no evidence of breathing coming from his chest and the body of the little baby boy was limp. Dr. Richmond acted more on impulse than training and placed his large hand about my miniature ankles, lifted the body up head down to about where the butt was level with his concerned eyes, and he gave me the first of many swats on my ass that I was certain to continue to receive as a child. Still, no sound or breathing. Then, afraid he would bust something by smacking the hell

out of me, Dr. Richmond dunked me headfirst into a bucket of cold water. He repeated this somewhat primitive baptism until I would die of shock or start breathing. It's as though he thought the choice to live or die was entirely mine. Somewhere between the twelfth dunk and the fourteenth whack I did come alive and started squalling with all my might; announcing to anyone within earshot that I had arrived and they could knock off the dunking and whacking crap."

Before Eloise passed, Victor's father moved the young family-much to his mother's chagrin - to Ketchikan, Alaska, where Eloise became pregnant with their third child. Sadly, she had a miscarriage and died a short time later from heart disease. Charles then moved the family to Seattle, Washington, where he met and married a widow with three young children named Florence. Charles and Florence eventually had two more children.

Unable to hold steady employment for very long, Charles once again moved his family. Packing Florence, seven children and everything they owned-pots, pans, chairs and suitcases tied to fenders, bumpers and roof-in their 1927 Buick sedan, they headed south on the Pacific Highway to Hayward, CA. After their long journey, the Hancock family got to work picking apricots and peddling a variety of kitchen items ranging from knives to sink strainers. They soon moved out of their tent and rented a house. Florence supplemented their income by becoming a maid for well-off families.

It was a difficult life, and Victor remembers his parents fighting a lot. Eventually, the fights resulted in Charles leaving Florence and taking his sons, Louis and Victor, on a long walk to San Francisco. They hitch-hiked a good part of the way and Victor, then nine, remembered it as "high adventure." Half a year later, Florence and the other children rejoined

Charles and the two boys.

During those rough-and-tumble Depression years, and well before child labor laws were enforced, Victor shined shoes in a tavern, stacked crates in warehouses and held any number of menial jobs to provide the family with a few dollars each week. At the same time, he struggled in school and was often kicked out for fighting.

Pearl Harbor

It was Pearl Harbor and his brother Louis becoming a pilot in the Army Air Force that encouraged Victor to finish high school and enlist. Then Louis, considered one of the Air Force's best pilots, died when his P-51 fighter was shot down over a Sumatran jungle. Almost at the same time, his beloved father, Charles, died of a heart attack. Victor was now very angry and, like so many other young Americans, wanted revenge.

Training to be a pilot was perilous as nearly half the young men who enlisted died in the U.S. while learning to fly. And those who survived, such as Victor, were sent immediately to Italy by way of South America and Africa.

Victor survived the brutal war and distinguished himself by earning the Airman's Medal for bravery during his Brenner Pass missions. He chuckled as we walked and talked about the time he almost crashed a small plane when giving his colonel flying lessons. And his voice had a wistful tone as he recounted fondly the beautiful young women he romanced in Italy and Corsica.

He was the first Victor I had known...and undoubtedly will always be the best.





(left, standing) with crew in 1942

Victor



*321stBG, 445thBS,
Lt Victor J Hancock*

*Hancock
Photo*



*Victor, darling of the singers at the WW2
Museum, New Orleans 2015*



FLY



U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

AAF EXAMINING BD - 166 W VAN BUREN - CHICAGO

More Artists in the 57th Bomb Wing



Moore and his drawings.

Gregory Moore, 487th, 340th, designed the 57th Bomb Wing Memorial at the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson.

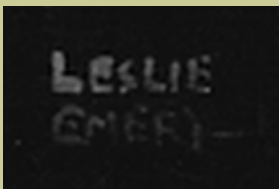


Pencil Drawing of 9D 'Briefing Time by 488 John Rome

From Collection of 489th Lt Leroy Ernst



This IS the Original Design from Alex Raymond



Leslie Emery's signature on MMR

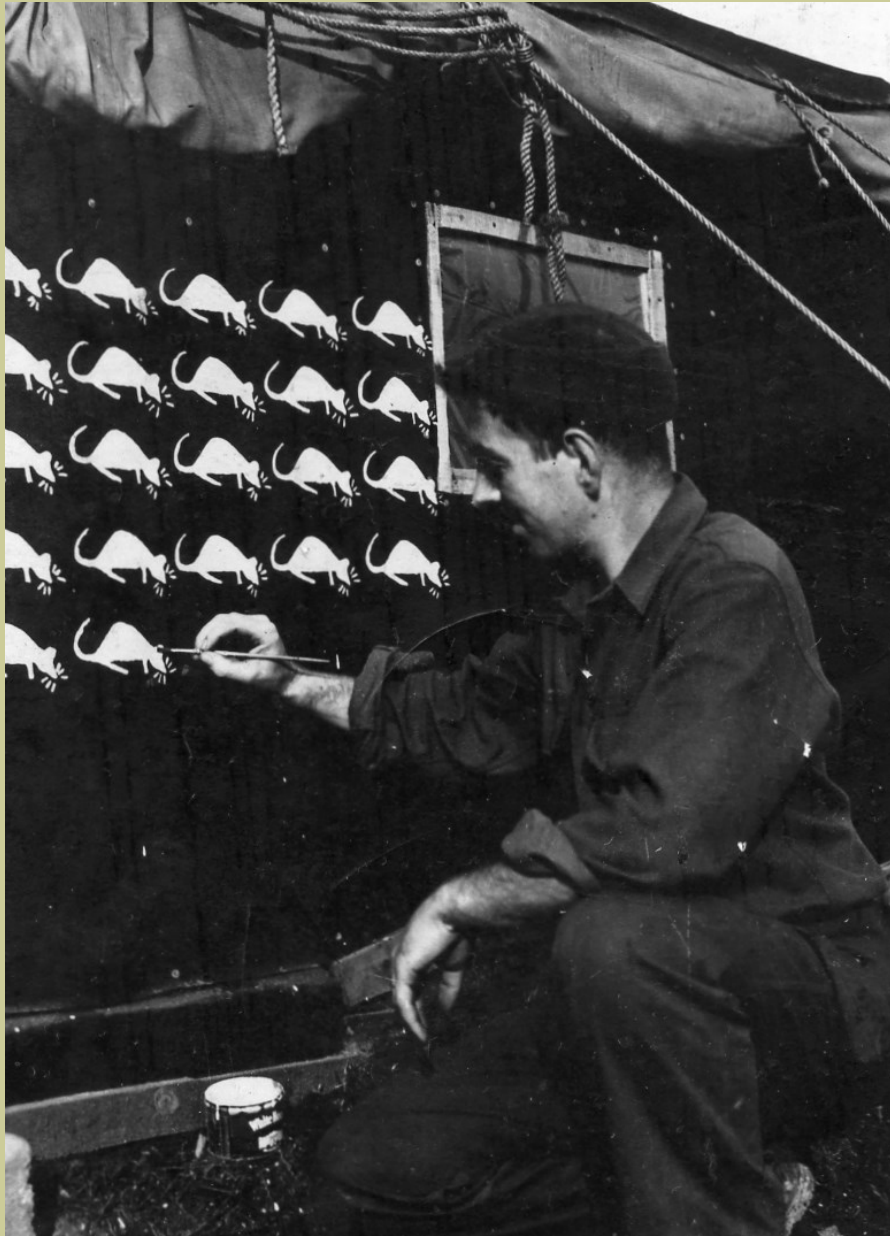


Crew Chief, Fred Lawrence, 445th marks another successful mission. Photo credit: Dominique Taddei

Not All Battles Were Fought in the Sky

As a reminder of the awful conditions the men of the 57th suffered through, here is a photo of an unidentified GI recording another kill.

Of rats in the encampment...



UP IN THE AIR, JUNIOR BIRDMAN

Junior Birdmen of America Song

Spirited

Up in the air, Jun - ior Bird - man, Fly-ing so
high off the ground. Is it a
bird, plane or Su - per man, No! It's Jun - ior -
Bird - man up - side down. And when you
hear the door - bell ring. When you
see that badge of tin. Then you will
know that Jun - ior Bird - man has
turned his box tops in.



www.makingmusicfun.net

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The Junior Birdmen

So, who were the Junior Birdmen?

The Junior Birdmen of America was an organization founded in 1934 for boys and girls interested in building model airplanes.

It was promoted by the Hearst newspapers with the cooperation of the U.S. Bureau of Air Commerce. The Hearst papers published weekly and daily articles about model-building and they sponsored national events and competitions all over the country.

It was wildly successful counting 578,000 members by 1937.

The cost to join was one dime.

The organization's motto was: "Today Pilots of Models — Tomorrow Model Pilots"

Junior Birdmen of America ceased operations in 1939 and is mostly remembered today for their theme song, "Up in the Air, Junior Birdman."

The theme song became popular sung around campfires with a variety of lyrics.

Most famously, it was sung to mock would-be or inexperienced aviators.

For example in the movie "To Hell and Back," when Audie Murphy's infantry buddies taunt the Air Corps boys in a bar.

See it here on YouTube: [Junior Birdmen](#)



...And that brings us to...

The Junior Birdmen of Corsica



The Junior Birdmen of Corsica

In 1991 Bob Zulauf, 310th BG 381st BG, published his memoir of his time in the service as a pilot under this title.

On July 18, 1944 Special Orders Number 79 listed the names of 100 second lieutenants, each had recently received their pilot's wings and each had completed twin-engine advanced flight training. They were being sent to Corsica to replace the war-weary B-25 pilots, most of whom had finished, or nearly finished their tour of combat duty.

There was only one small problem. **Not one of them had ever flown or even flown in a Mitchell B-25 bomber.**

Thus, the nickname given to them "The Junior Birdmen of Corsica."

They reached Corsica on August 14, 1944 and the 100 2nd Looies were divided up among the three bomb groups of the 57th Bomb Wing.

Zulauf recounts that when he and four others of the group flew from Naples to Ghisonaccia, it was the first time he had been in a B-25.

Robert Gilliam of the 340th Bomb Group, 488th Squadron recalled: *"I still remember the shock on Colonel Chapman's face when we signed in at the 340th and we told him that we had never flown a B-25."*

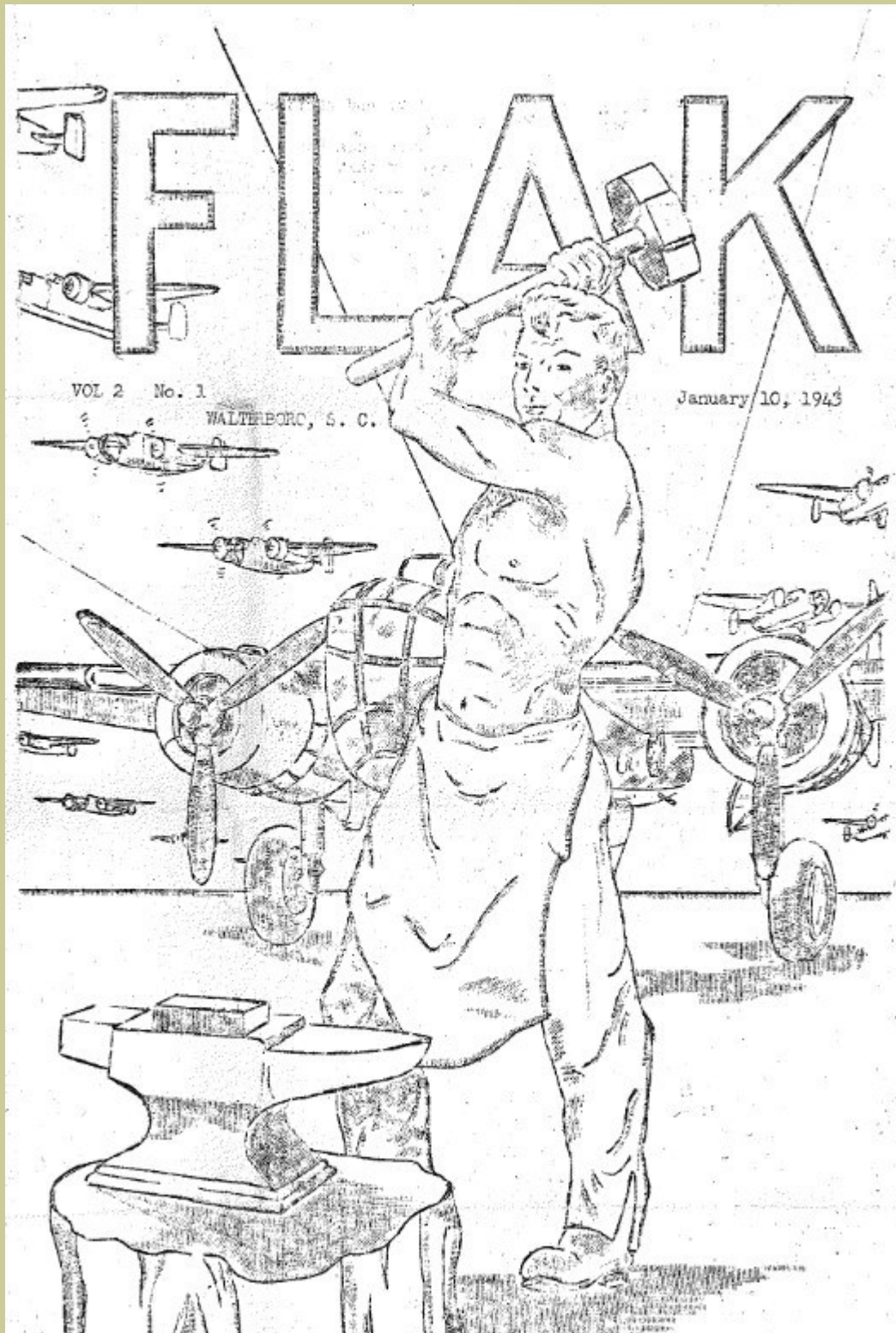
The regular pilots were disappointed when the Junior Birdmen arrived. They were expecting experienced pilots to replace them so they could go home. Now, they had to give the Junior Birdmen instruction on how to fly a B-25.

Bob Stangier, 381st BS, recalls that he received 10 to 15 hours of flight training before his first mission. According to Bob: *"I do remember flying in the co-pilot seat and flying around the north end of Corsica. Another thing I can remember was flying along the beach and simulating the final approach and the flair out. I remember being in the pilot seat and Captain Carter Waugh was in the co-pilot seat; I got a little confused with the throttles and couldn't get them pulled back. So I changed the tension on them and got them too loose and they fell back and, of course, slowed the engines down. We were already flying pretty slow and we just about went in. Waugh made sure I knew how the tension worked with the throttles."*

Zulauf flew his 70th and last mission on April 15, 1945. Bob Hight and Bob Stangier were also done and piloting aircraft on that mission. *"As we approached the field on our return, we pulled away from the rest of the formation and the three of us buzzed the entire length of the airfield at about 50 foot altitude. This was a happy climax to celebrate our final bombing mission."*



**Newspaper of the 340th Bomb Group
January 10, 1943
Walterboro, South Carolina**



H-E-A-D-Q-U-A-R-T-E-R-S

Congratulations to M/Sgt Foster on his appointment as 1st Lieutenant. Hope he does as well wit the girls in Tampa as 1st Lt. as he did in Charleston and Waterboro as M/Sgt. Nichols dropped everything yesterday and ran into town to see the little dear that blew in from Atlanta. (We trust that it is Betty.) M/Sgt. Hunn lost his jeep again, and this time it was not the fault of the lackadaisical Tureck. We had two little Setzers this past week, one a blue-jacket and the other a ____ (You guess it.) The old man has had a wicked glint in his eye of late, and we of the cellar brigade believe he has designs — ‘nuff said. Those two Irishmen from Philly came back from three day passes followed by the usual avalanche of mail. Sgt. Keep expressed some doubt as to the proper disposition of his life-blood down at the dispensary today, but we assured him everything was labelled carefully. Sgt. Slutsky returned from pass this past week with his bag full of Kosher bologna and his heart full of Dottie. We are struggling under a great doubt as to the official duties of a certain Master Sgt. Here in Hq. Rumors have it that he is 1st Sgt., Gp. Transportation man, and Group Mess Sergeant — all in the same breath.

Clarence Anderton, Professor of pastoral science, has been giving free instruction in marine navigation (in rowboats), the fine art of crab-potting, and “mule-skinning.” The subject of his discourse this evening will be “The dissemination and cultivation of Hayseed in the swamps of Matthews County, Va.” Professor Anderton still maintains that his native swamps are good for something.

CAPTAIN KELLER’S CLAN [486th BS]

Here’s a plea to those noble men of Captain Keller’s squadron to delegate a reporter for FLAK. Sgt. Labe who started this column last week is sick I hospital this week, and your frantic editor has bene unable to round up a reporter from this squadron. There must be some of you with a journalistic trend who would be willing to knock out a few notes for FLAK once a week. So COME ON BOYS, GIVE!!!!

WHITTINGTON’S WARRIORS [487th BS]

“ONE WAY TO NEW GUINEA, PLEASE” Stout in his conviction that one battlefield is no better or worse than any other and superb in his indifference to where the brass hats shipped him and his B-25 (“Hell’s Half Acre”), Operations Officer, John Patrick Knox crashed his fist on the desk last week and rattled clerical personnel with a snarling approval of New Guinea as the place “where this outfit’s got to go to keep me happy.” Before him on the desk stood a picture frame with the number one girl from Baltimore eyeing the world with lowered lids. Attached to it was a likeness of a New Guinea female which he had only a moment before received from T/Sgt. Buller, the squadron’s chief photo man. There is not now, and never has been, a girdle problem in New Guinea. J.P. goggled at the bare evidence of this in delighted admiration.

“Bring her back to Baltimore and teach her how to play contract,” mused the executive in an audible undertone, “and she’d make ‘em all retreat to the powder room.”

Nailed by a FLAK reporter in his barracks at 7:30 P.M. as he was preparing to go to bed, 1st Lt. Knox denied that Miss New Guinea had complicated his relations with Nancy. Said

J.P.K. "It's ridiculous. I haven't really met the girl. Besides, she's only fourteen."

"OPEN LETTER FROM CAPT. WHITTINGTON"

I hereby order those men in this squadron who have been telling Private Stanley Siok that he must draw a decontamination suit to stop confusing him in this matter. The adjutant informs me that Pvt. Siok's work has suffered since every second man in the outfit has begun accosting him with "Say, Stosh, they're giving out decontamination suits in squadron supply. Have you yours yet?"

Investigation has revealed that Pvt. Siok does not know what a decontamination suit looks like and what the guilty parties have been taking advantage of this by describing weird looking garments and insisting that he obtain one from squadron supply. This embarrasses Lt. Tasker and his capable staff, who have nothing in their ample stocks resembling the articles described. Likewise it wastes Pvt. Siok's valuable time. When the proper occasion arises, rest assured, I shall see that not only Pvt. Siok but also the rest of the Squadron receives a properly tailored decontamination suit cut on strictly G.I. lines.

Your cooperation in this matter etc.

Stanley P. Matthews, our young navigation officer, was observed recently in a tornado of computers and celestial navigation tables which operations personnel were trying to conceal from him, and he was trying to hold out to make sure he wouldn't get lost on a long journey.

Our congratulations to S/Sgt. Dick Hurley and Rober Evans, who went before the Officer's Candidate School Board in Columbia and came away with assurances of Lt. Col. Winslett that they have what it takes to make successful of-

icers.

This squadron has a little fellow named Gagne in the armament section who is small enough to crawl into the lower turret and make repairs. Other squadrons not blessed with such diminutive workers, can't get balky turrets into working order as quickly as this one can, thanks to Gagne's convenient size. One day S/Sgt. Ed Johnston, turret specialist, was working with the shorty and when he turned around he discovered Gagne nowhere in the plane. He had just about decided Gagne had beaten a retreat to the P.X. when a voice below him floated up, "O.K. Ed, she's ready to fire again." Johnston swears that Gagne then crawled up out of a cubby hole that a cat would find cramping.

If you see the pilots of this outfit beating their brains out and pestering each other for detailed information on all the gadgets on the B-25, they're probably sweating out the aerial engineer's proficiency exam which Operations has decided every pilot should be able to pass. M/Sgt. Lynch dreamed up the questions and apparently knows all the answers. Cigars this week are being dispensed by Cpl. Johnny Melia, statistical clerk, who married the girl back home a few days back following a lightning trip to New Jersey. She'll be waiting, Johnny, for the end of this fracas. And who won't? Congratulations!

This column was prepared by the squadron's regular FLAK reporter who was browbeaten into it by Editor Voohees, who got him to work only by tracking him down in his barracks, carting him over to Group Hq in a jeep and plying him with enticing little concoctions. But then lots of reporters have to be led around like that before they'll give out. Hope you folks get a little of the kick out of these nonsense items that your reporter got out of Voorhees's "Persuader." Keep 'em up in the blue until

next week, same station.

Note; A good reporter like Sgt. Hickey deserves a little running after. A few more Sgt. Hickeys and we'll run competition with the Chicago Tribune.

CAPTAIN BAILEY'S BOYS [488th BS]

Cajolery is the use of delusive enticements. "Chubby" Goranson is proving himself as artist at the trade through his gentle 5:45 up-getting ritual. Instead of rudely instigating an en masse turn out at reveille, he treats each individual individually, and changes his methods according to the unique demands and temperament of each. No bugle-bungling despot, he plucks persuasively at the protective blanket of one, or gently tickles the toes of another. His nemesis is that stalwart lad from Maine who insists upon arising earlier than the little barrel himself. But of all aspects of the whole procedure — including pleas, commands and curses — the most delightful period is the finale. As the deadline approaches for roll call, "Chubby" invariably breaks down, his voice succumbs to desperation and he shrieks, "Get out of those -/*/? &%\$# beds! Please!"

Pasquale finds that his new G.I. glasses are invaluable. Now when he shoots crap he can actually see his money disappear.

Ed Laster was slightly chagrined to open his Laundry and find half of it returned untouched. His was a case where half was too much for the laundry. There is a limit to everything, even the number of pieces.

Quickie Miethke is still dashing wildly about closely pursued by six irate Pilots waving blank "Honorable Discharge" forms. There'll come a day old man.

PARRISH'S PROTEGES [489th BS]

Well, they hacked off the best part of our column last week because we saved it for the end, so this week we shoot everything important to you right quick. I guess they had to cut to make room for something lese so we lost a chance to say something fitting in regard to the crew of "630."

It's damned hard sometimes, to say anything fitting in such situations, but it's obvious how we all felt to lose the C.O. and the lads flying with him. [*Fred Hampton and his crew died during a training flight in Texas December 26, 1942*] Perhaps it sums up in a little group of words I wrote and so I pass them on to you. It's called Last Flight:

LAST FLIGHT

You, who live to fly and joke and laugh
while death stands by with an epitaph
When you're sleeping the long sleep
And you voice is stilled and your laughter ceases,
It's then we realize your worth and our need
for you increases.
It's wrong to wait until you're gone
To say the things we've known,
It's wrong to keep unto ourselves
The qualities in you that make us feel along
It's wrong to feel you'll not return
From a flight into the skies,
That as life goes on without you
We'll never see your laughing eyes.
But because of knowing you our life's enriched,
No matter why you were taken and only memories remain,
Our heat is full, and we'll pause to say "Yes,
we were friends and I miss you today."

— T/Sgt. John Rovick

PARRISH'S PROTEGES (cont'd)

Mucho grandioso welcome to our new, and somewhat familiar C.O., Lt. Parrish. Somewhat familiar because of a few of us having been at Myrtle Beach doing a little lead-slingin, we remember he was stationed there. Outside of a few of us who are crazy (did any of Youse guys ever work with radio?) I think he'll find out it's a pretty fair assortment of men and I know they'll do their share to show him. Just a word of warning though.

Some tell him to keep away from McAvoy as far as any games of chance are concerned. Mac just made a down payment on a gold mine and it didn't dent him at all. That guy hits "21" more often than I hit the latrine.

Our sympathy to the "Gees" in the Orderly room for the work that's been swamping them the last few days. In spite of everything they seem to be holding their own. We got a pretty good crew in there and they're doing fine to keep allotments, insurance, pay, and forms galore straightened out. Yes, Lavender, I said pay. Now stay with it!

Welcome to the commissioned gentilhommes as they enter our mess. We hope they enjoy our meagre repast more than their last. Egad, that almost rimes.

Speaking of mastication, Yes, and it isn't what you think it is, Gagne, Benny Furstein tried to get the one and only to drop down for a visit so's he could pop the question. She wouldn't pay the visit so Benny has a single look in his eye which should last the duration. That's O.K. Benny, it's just a wonderful institution.

All the Techs and the Masters are going around mumbling something about — "Mess Kits, huh — Mess kits."

Titlebaum getting hoarse — losing his voice on the umpteenth time through mail call. His memory for who got letters without looking is amazing.

McAvoy sending Money Orders home, buying rings, etc... "Frenchie" looking behind him as he walks...

Lavender in that Goddam steel helmet looking like an over draped mushroom...

Jarvis, of radio maintenance, looking like a dramatized version of the Grapes of Wrath, after his cholera shot...

Lt. Fields and [illegible] stopping each other every five minutes asking, "How many men in the squadron now?" Then the recount starts.

Part of the detachment at Houston Returning with bags under the bags under their eyes...

That should make enough friends for now so, "Until next week at this same time, Philco and I say to you..."

You're cleared, number one to land Wheels down and locked...

P.S. *** Aerial engineer Culver is our nomination for the "Will-power Kid." He sits in Cawthon Hotel in Louisiana, women (but beautiful) waltz by, and he ignores them like the true-blue, faithful, man of iron will he is. (PAID COMMERCIAL). No fooling, what resistance!!

TEMPUS FUGIT

The horse and mule live 30 years
And know nothing of wines and beers:

The goat and sheep at 20 die,
And never taste of Scotch and Rye;

The cow drinks water by the ton,
And at 18 is mostly done;

The dog at 15 cashes in,
Without the aid of rum and gin;

The cat in milk and water soaks,
And then at 12 short years it croaks;

The modest, sober, bone-dry hen,
Lays eggs for nogs, then dies at ten;

All animals are strictly dry,
They sinless live and swiftly die;

But sinful, ginful rum-soaked men,
Survive for three-score years and ten!



*Floyd Miller,
9th Combat Camera Unit*

WHO'S IN THE CREW?

Our digital archives contain dozens and dozens of photos of crews posing for a picture after the completion of a mission.


Very few of those photos identify the crewmen. So, we are putting some of those photos out for our readers to try and identify. In many cases we can not even identify the Group or Squadron.

Do you recognize anyone in this photo?



LT. COL. DOOLITTLE, LT. COLE AND THE RAIDERS WERE EMPOWERED
TO BE AMERICA'S COMPETITIVE EDGE AGAINST OUR ADVERSARIES.



THE JAMES DOOLITTLE ★ RICHARD COLE ★ FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
DOOLITTLE  **RAID**

A UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PRODUCTION ★ DIRECTED BY U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES

AS WE COMMEMORATE THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DOOLITTLE RAID, WE HONOR ALL
AIRMEN WHO HAVE PAVED THE WAY TO PROVIDE AMERICA WITH THE AIRPOWER NEEDED TO
DEFEND THE NATION; JUST AS THE DOOLITTLE RAIDERS DID TO DETER AND DEFEAT OUR
ADVERSARIES AND PROTECT OUR HOMELAND.



LOOKING BACK AT THE 1940s ERA
INNOVATE. ACCELERATE. THRIVE.

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SWITCH ON! CONTACTS!

We were contacted by Joseph Wright, grandson of Lt. Robert L. Hill, 340th BG 487th BG. He shared with us this photo and a version of the same photo which he had colorized.

Lt. Robert L. Hill, 487th BS Photos:



Robert Hill is third from left. Other crewman unidentified.



CONTACTS! (cont'd)

We were contacted by Marion Wagamon, wife of Charles H. Wagamon 340th BG 486th BS, with the news of this honor bestowed on him dated November 14, 2025:

Since I have you on the line....below is an update on my husband, Lt. Col. (ret) Charles H. Wagamon that may have some information for your archives or for the 57th Bomb Wing's publication:

Saturday 8 November 2025, Charles H. Wagamon, a WWII bombardier-navigator, received a Congressional Veterans Commendation presented by Congressman Pete Sessions, along with 2 others recipients from this district.

Charles Wagamon, born in Lewes, Delaware, 28 August 1924, turned 101 years old this year. He has resided in Huntsville, Texas, 57 of those years.



CONTACTS! (cont'd)

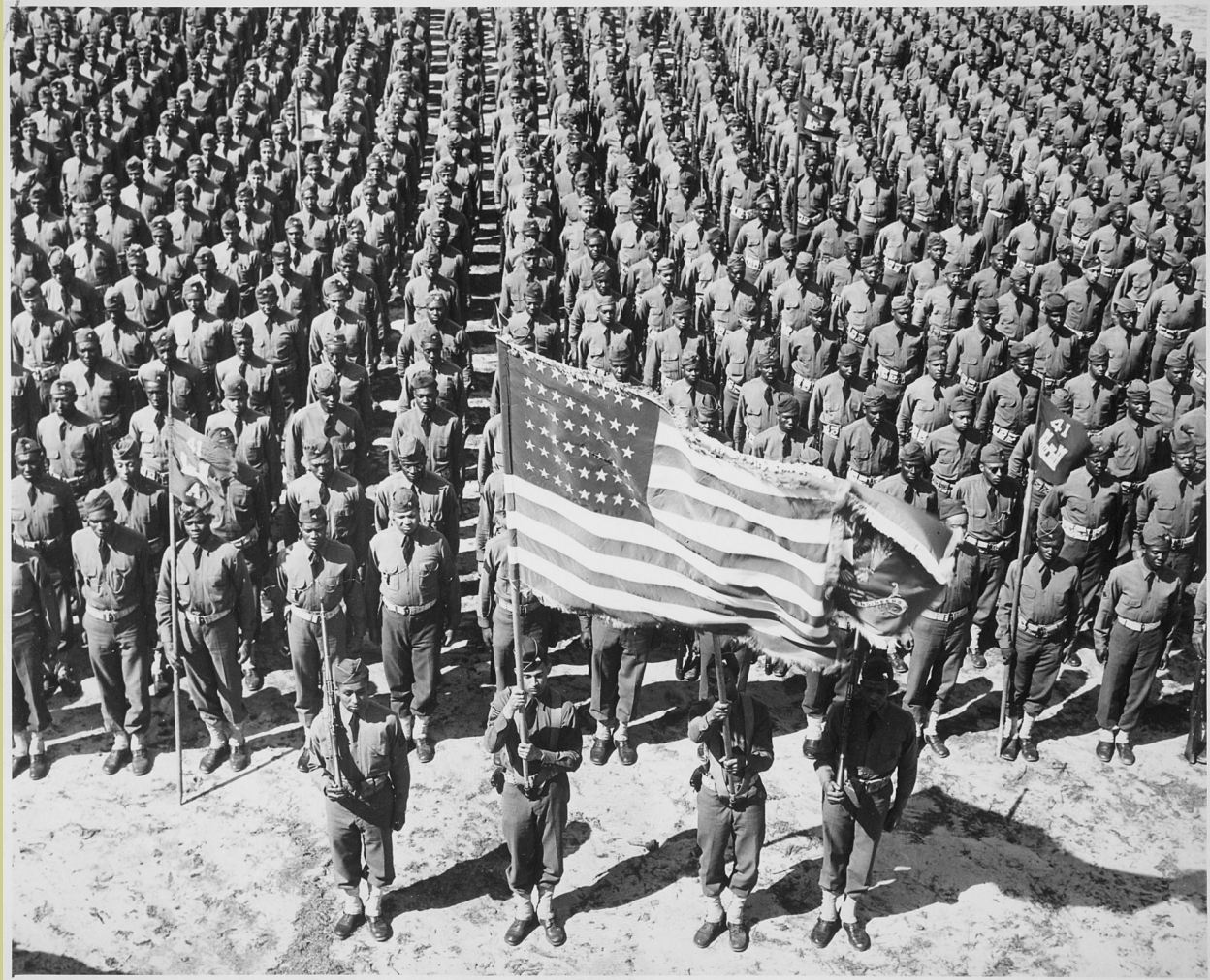
Our Italian friend, Stefano Merz, continues to amaze us with his ability to identify the location of our ships from photos of them flying over the Brenner Pass. Here is the latest example:

“If it can be useful for your research, the approximate coordinates of “Madge” in the cover photo are 47°06'20"N 11°28'25"E. The plane was over Steinach am Brenner (Austria), and the picture is taken from north to south (more or less).”



41st Engineer Regiment

February is “Black History Month” in the US. Let us observe that by acknowledging the contribution of the 41st Engineer General Service Regiment (Colored) to the success of the 57th Bomb Wing.



The 41st Engineering Regiment on parade at Fort Bragg before deployment



41st Engineer Regiment (cont'd)

The 41st was first deployed to North Africa and later served on Corsica alongside of the 57th Bomb Wing.

They built and maintained the runways and other buildings on the bases.

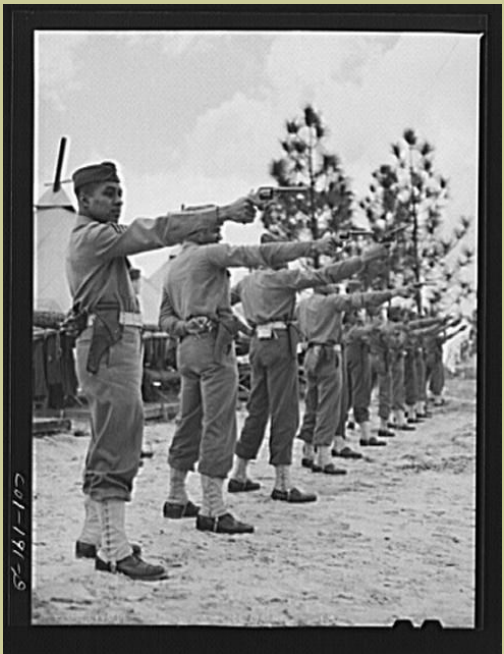
As an extra added bonus, a number of the Engineers were accomplished, professional musicians prior to joining the Army.

They played at the Cotton Club and other clubs in Harlem and some were members of famous big bands like Cab Calloway's and Count Basie's.

Those musicians often provided music for Wing dances and concerts. The Wing War Diaries of all the Squadrons are full of praise for their first-class performances.

They maintained the runways and the morale of the men of the 57th

(Right) The 41st at Fort Bragg training for combat.



(Left) Entertaining the boys of the 57th BW.



WHAT'S NEW ONLINE

Target Photo Pages Revised

We were dismayed to note that many of the embedded Google maps on the 340th Bombardment Group Targets page were failing to load. Apparently, Google had made some change to the embed code.

As a result we had to go back and recode many of the pages. We took advantage of the situation to also add in the entries from the 340th BG Headquarters War Diary which was not available when the original pages were developed.

If you have not visited that page in a while, you may want to take another look.

The 340th flew nearly 800 missions during the war. The Targets page documents 329 of those missions.

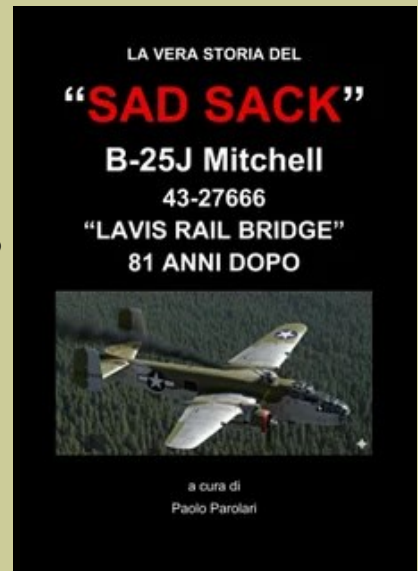
Each mission includes the entries from the War Diary of each participating squadron, photos of the target, a Google map of the same target as it looks today, mission reports and crew lists of the men who flew the mission. In some cases there is also supplemental information and photos.

Find those pages here: [340th Bombardment Group Combat Missions](#)

* * * * *



We added a link to this book to the "Books" page of the 310th Bomb Group



WHAT'S NEW ONLINE (cont'd)

The 57th Bomb Wing website continues to be a very busy place. Here are the statistics for 2025:

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2025	1,042	1,837	3,480	23,144	20.66 GB
Feb 2025	1,586	2,076	5,920	22,390	17.26 GB
Mar 2025	1,425	2,226	3,577	16,479	16.16 GB
Apr 2025	1,114	1,807	3,234	18,411	35.62 GB
May 2025	1,327	1,932	3,218	18,787	13.22 GB
Jun 2025	1,402	1,715	3,417	21,145	16.76 GB
Jul 2025	1,092	1,350	2,439	15,774	15.66 GB
Aug 2025	1,288	1,689	4,585	22,208	24.97 GB
Sep 2025	1,817	2,379	6,761	23,491	28.59 GB
Oct 2025	4,805	5,236	6,568	28,392	36.40 GB
Nov 2025	3,324	4,012	12,071	36,439	40.45 GB
Dec 2025	3,145	3,773	13,209	31,528	38.65 GB
Total	23,367	30,032	68,479	278,188	304.40 GB

And the top 10 downloads for the month of January 2026:

Downloads (Top 10) - Full list					
Downloads: 999		Hits	206 Hits	Bandwidth	Average size
	/321Ref_files/19February1944.pdf	119	35	5.40 GB	35.89 MB
	/310thHistory/310_BG_1942-10.pdf	116	2	44.06 MB	382.36 KB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-09.pdf	108	0	684.49 MB	6.34 MB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-12.pdf	93	2	292.45 MB	3.08 MB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1943-08.pdf	89	5	204.75 MB	2.18 MB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-01.pdf	88	10	247.41 MB	2.52 MB
	/links_files/Over%20the%20Med%20Part3.pdf	87	0	2.52 GB	29.66 MB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1945-02.pdf	84	4	370.61 MB	4.21 MB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-08.pdf	84	0	417.90 MB	4.97 MB
	/321stHistory/321_BG_1945-04.pdf	77	2	463.64 MB	5.87 MB

On our Facebook page we now have 1,033 members!



LET'S KEEP 'EM FLYING



WWW.57THBOMBWING.COM